

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE  
PY 40 CITY APPLICATIONS – CDBG/ESG/HOPWA/HOME  
PUBLIC HEARING  
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2014  
6:00 PM**

ATTENDANCE: Co-chair Banta; Co-chair Martinez; Council members: DeJesus, Martinez-Walker

CITY STAFF: Tyler Fairbairn; Acting Deputy Director  
Alana Kabel; Assistant CAO

Co-chair Banta called the public hearings to order at 6:20 pm.

He welcomed everyone that was present to the public hearings and announced that there would be a 3-minute limit to present their application.

*The programs were presented in order by Application ID# and Program Name:*

***Note)\*= portions of the program information presented during the previous Citizen's Union Committee public hearings have been included in the following ECDE Committee presentations; for the purpose of providing additional details about the program.***

- 1) COB: Housing & Community Development

**Bridgeport Lead Free Families – Funding Request \$25,000.00  
Citizen's Union recommendation - \$25,000.00**

Sabine the Program Director stated that the program has been operating since 2005. They were awarded a fourth grant from HUD and the last grant was for \$2.5 million in addition to \$200,000 of Healthy Homes funding; noting that CDBG money is the only acceptable match to HUD funds. It was stated that there are three components to the program 1) lead free funding 2) outreach and education 3) job readiness. The work is done by professional contractors and the work is done to service the community. It was explained that an additional \$200,000 will be used to remediate lead and asbestos if they are found in the home. It was stated that two key things apply: a) income eligible applicants *and* b) the participant has to be up to date with their taxes. Question: Co-chair Banta asked if the \$25,000 was the

minimum amount they could request? **Response:** yes. Question: Co-chair Banta asked if they ever try to go after the homeowner to recoup remediation costs? **Response:** they try to recoup some funds if the homeowner can afford it, but the city doesn't charge fees unless they exceed a certain amount. Question: Co-chair Martinez asked when the contract will end? **Response:** they still have two years to complete and spend the grant funds they currently have.

\*They work with the health department and receive referrals for kids that are found to have high lead levels. The contractors do the work to create healthy safe living units. The funds are also for the healthy homes program to prevent mold and only certified lead works can work in the program. Overall, there is a comprehensive approach to providing training and they also work with the fire department to promote fire safety. It was noted that there are currently (800) lead safe units.

2) COB: Lighthouse After School Program  
**Youth Service Bureau (YSB) – Funding Request \$79,090.00**  
**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$39,048.00**

Tammy Papa, Director stated that this request supports the YSB grant; it's a dollar-for-dollar match for a grant from the Department of Education (YSB) and CDBG funding is requested to support the match. It was stated that they will hire an YSB grant manager and the funds that would normally go to the position will decrease the amount of funding that goes out to the community. It's a two year grant cycle that will require an additional match. The total grant received is \$293k, which includes the amount of \$147,757 from the state and \$145,885 in-kind match for a total of \$291,642. Question: Co-chair Martinez asked how they chose the groups? **Response:** they conducted a technical assistance session and distributed information on how to apply for the grant. It was noted that people from the community sit for an afternoon and review the applications. Whatever they receive from the state, they expect them to match it. The in-kind match process was further explained. Question: Co-chair Banta questioned if there is another organization under the Lighthouse Program umbrella that already received funding, will the YSB funding be reduced? **Response:** no, each program is considered to be separate and they can apply for other funding.

\*The breakdown of the (YSB) budget was distributed and reviewed. It was stated that last year they had twenty-two organizations apply for funding and thirteen of them were funded.

*Application #'s 3 through 10 were presented by Iris Molina and Martha Santiago from CoB: Social Services Organization for the program name indicated:*

3) **Emergency Rental Assistance – Funding Request \$35,000.00**  
**Citizen's Union recommendation - \$20,000.00**

Iris Molina, Director stated that the funding will provide services to (240) individuals, but they currently only serve (100) individuals or (19) families. Question: Co-chair Banta asked how the referrals come in? **Response:** they receive city department referrals and referrals from the Red Cross and fire department. Primary assistance is given to persons that are in dire straits. Comment: Council member Martinez-Walker commented that the program is phenomenal for the city and they do a great job. Question: Co-chair Martinez asked if a family has a fire in their home, do they help them obtain temporary shelter etc.? **Response:** yes and they also refer the family to other agencies for assistance.

\*The grant was created one year ago when they found that they needed to help individuals that are falling through the cracks. For example: if a person is working and their car broke down, assistance can be provided to help that person fix the car so that they can continue working; the assistance helps, so they don't have to make the choice of whether or not to pay the rent or fix their car. The goal is to serve between (50 to 100) persons. It was noted that the funds were depleted within six months last year. It was stated that the program is definitely needed. The participant doesn't receive the money, it goes directly to the landlord. It was noted that the agency to apply is located at 752 East Main Street, Bridgeport.

#### 4) **Veteran's Food Pantry – Funding Request \$10,000.00** **Citizen's Union recommendation - \$0**

Iris Molina stated that under the grant, as of July 1 they served (395) individuals at the food pantry. The program is geared to helping veterans maintain a food supply when they run out of food, until the end of the month.

Tyler Fairbairn explained that this program can no longer fund **stand alone food pantries**. However, they can fund soup kitchens. He explained that under ESG guidelines, there has to be a functioning kitchen set up to qualify for the funding. Question: Council member DeJesus asked the number of participants that are actually veterans? **Response:** 80% of the participants are veterans. Question: Council member DeJesus asked what other programs in the city provide for veterans? **Response:** they are the only program in the city that provides this service. – *there was some further discussion regarding the ESG guidelines changes as it related to operating a food pantry.*

Ms. Molina expressed that the subject is very sensitive, especially since the program was strictly for veterans, noting that they also receive other services through the program and that's the reason they like it. Comment: Council member DeJesus stated that the issue wouldn't be resolved tonight, but it's important that the matter be revisited. Question: Council member Lyons questioned if they would qualify for the funding if they found a way to secure a space for a soup kitchen set up? **Response:** Mr. Fairbairn stated that they may have time before the final funding is allocated to possibly find a location for a soup kitchen arrangement.

\*The program runs from July through December 31; they served (730) families last year. It was stated that veterans are close knit and they tend to want to go to a food pantry where other veterans frequent. They learn how to prepare nutritional meals and they also provide transportation. It was noted that 8,096 people sought help last year. They also provide case management and it was noted that the need for the services increase as more veterans come out of the military.

**5) Anti-Blight Support – Funding Request \$20,000.00**

**Citizen's Union recommendation: 17,000.00**

Iris Molina stated that she joined the inspection committee lead by Jodie-Paul and they work in conjunction with various departments. They meet on a weekly basis to designate houses that are blighted in Bridgeport. They have found that some owners can't afford to rent a dumpster or hire someone to clean up the property, so the funds are used for those purposes. It was noted that Chris Rosario handles blight related issues on the city side and she works on the social services side. Question: Co-chair Banta asked if they make an attempt to go after landlords for money that is spent to clean up a property? **Response:** yes, they attempt to bill the landlord for the services or they take steps to put a lien on the house. It was clarified that the recipient doesn't receive the money; it goes directly to the vendor. Question: Council member DeJesus questioned if Chris Rosario's office offers the same type of assistance? **Response:** no.

\*This application was submitted for the first time based on need. Referrals come from the Department of Health. The purpose is for a dwelling that doesn't have decent, safe or sanitary living conditions and the person has to be relocated. However, if someone owns their home, they don't have the authority to remove them. It was noted that some of the clients have mental disabilities and they have to be taught how to balance their money. Funds are geared towards providing services to those living in blighted conditions, such as not have electricity. They partner with mental health specialists to conduct a diagnosis and then they intervene to get help for that person to improve the blight conditions. Question: what is the number of people that are pre-qualified? **Response:** they currently have five (5) people that qualify.

**6) East Side Senior Center Program – Funding Request \$10,000.00**

**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$8,500.00**

Martha Santiago, Program Director stated that the funding will be used for supplies and other services – *see below*. It was stated that the center allows each individual to live their life to full potential and they provide an atmosphere for seniors to do that.

\*The funds will pay for rent at the east side senior center. The services are diverse to serve the community up to sixty (60) seniors per week. The program hours are from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday through Friday. There are special trips on the weekends, arts and crafts, health screenings and nurse visits twice monthly to do general health screens for blood pressure.

**7) East Side Senior Center Rental – Funding Request \$40,000.00**

**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$40,000.00**

Iris Molina stated the funding is for the lease of a large community room and office space at the building that is owned by Marrakech Inc. It was noted that fifty to sixty seniors attend daily and sometimes more attend. They provide social activities on the weekends and during the evening. And they ensure that they have healthy meals daily, noting that the seniors have direct access to the center. Question: Co-chair Martinez asked what else the funding would cover besides the rent? **Response:** the funding will also cover utilities.

**8) Furniture Assistance Program – Funding Request \$7,000.00**

**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$0**

Iris Molina stated that this is a new grant that resulted from an idea that they came across regarding the issue of clients coming out of rehabilitation and don't have any furniture. The membership cost is \$500.00 per year and the individual has to pay \$130.00. They go to the furniture warehouse and pick out their own furniture and then it's delivered at a cost of \$75.00. Question: Co-chair Martinez asked the amount the individual contributes? **Response:** they pay \$130.00, noting that the first fifty eligible participants pay zero. Question: Co-chair Banta asked what the income status was for those to qualify? **Response:** the requirement is for low to moderate income persons; for example: the income guideline for a family of five would be \$25,000. Question: Co-chair Banta asked how long the organization has been in effect? **Response:** for a couple of years.

\*This program services persons that are referred by the Red Cross that become displaced due to fire. They have found that many victims of a fire use the program because they lost a lot. Eligibility is based on income level and need.

**9) Utility Shut-Off Program – Funding Request \$10,000.00**

**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$5,000.00**

Ms. Molina stated that this program assists individuals to get their utilities turned back on. She explained that in order to have the service turned back on, they have to pay a portion of the bill first, but they usually don't have the money to make the payment. She stated that the money goes directly to the utility company.

\*This program provides utility shut off protection for persons that get their utilities shut off and if their electric or gas bill is over \$1,000.000.

**10) CHORE Program Supplies – Funding Request \$5,000.00**

**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$5,000.00**

Ms. Molina stated that this funding will pay for a maintenance person to go to a senior's house to do repairs that are needed. However, when materials or parts are needed, the person usually can't pay for it; so the funds will cover those costs. It was

specified that this program is strictly for seniors. Question: Council member Lyons asked who contacts the program for help? **Response:** the client usually contacts the program and they also advertise in libraries and senior centers. Question: Co-chair Banta asked if the prices are monitored for the cost of any materials or parts? **Response:** they generally find a vendor to do the work and they also reach out to places like Home Depot to ask them if it's possible to match the cost of the materials.

\*This program is paid through SWCAA. The program is for seniors only that are 65 years old and over. They visit senior centers and senior housing to advertise and give out information.

11) COB: Lighthouse After School Program  
**Mayor's Conservation Corp – Funding Request \$97,668.00**  
**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$62,050.00**

Bill Murphy, Program Coordinator stated they have served the city for five years. They service thirty to forty youth that signed up for the program through The Workplace Inc. The youth canvass neighborhoods and distribute information concerning energy conservation and clean energy. They also work on nature trails and landscaping. They have trained over (300) youth in the past five years, noting that some of the youth that were previously trained, often return to the program to train the other youth. And many of the youth come back the following year to volunteer. He expressed that they hope to expand the program this year for seniors who will receive a stipend for their participation in the program.

\*The program is conducted during the summer months and consists of forty (40) students from high school, college and foster homes. They go door-to-door to educate people on energy and water conservation. The youth are from The WorkPlace summer employment program. To date, they have trained over (300) high school and young adults in water conservation, such as; recycling. The past season helped residents of Bridgeport get services and materials from the energy efficiency fund that comes from United Illuminating. They give back to the residents by replacing a poor functioning refrigerator. In addition, there are twenty (20) seniors up to 68 years old who go around two hours per week and clean up the parks and they are given a stipend. The students are also taught how to do landscaping, repair nature trails etc. They have three conservation aides and they just added an additional ten(10) students to work during the summer. It was further noted that the students are taught how to canvas by a professional firm. The program is part of the B-Green Program and the residents that have benefited from the program are low to moderate income.

12) COB: Parks and Recreation  
**Public Parks – Funding Request \$260,000.00**  
**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$133,282.75**

Steve Hladun, Special Projects Coordinator stated that the funding request will be used to construct a family splash pad located near the old fire house – *he referred to photos distributed to show the first splash pad that was constructed*. He noted that the splash pad has been a success. They also constructed a splash pad at Newfield Park and they built one around Washington Park. He expressed that it's the parks and recreation mission to upgrade parks and work together with the community and they hope to increase use of the parks. Comment: Council member Lyons commented that she thought all parks should be used at their highest peak for the enjoyment of the community. Question: Council member Lyons asked about the ball-mobility park project? **Response:** they are currently in the process of securing funding for that project. Council member Lyons asked to be kept updated. Question: Co-chair Banta asked if the funding will also be used for salaries? **Response:** no, the funding will be used for construction and concrete, but not salaries. Question: Co-chair Martinez asked if the funding would be for two water parks? **Response:** the funding will be for one splash pad at Wentfield Park.

\*This program is for improvements identified at Wentfield Park. The park area was revitalized during the late 1990's and during early 2000. It was noted that a grant was received to construct splash pads at Newfield Park and Marin Park and for the location at Wentfield Park, a manifold system will be installed underground.

13) COB: Parks and Recreation  
**Tree Planting – Funding Request \$125,000.00**  
**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$60,000.00**

Steve Hladun stated that the funds will be used to continue tree planting across the city. He mentioned the benefits that trees provide, noting that parks, trees and open spaces are critical for the good of the city. He relayed that after there is storm damage, they often have to remove trees. He noted that in the past, trees were planted that weren't necessarily the best for an area. During the spring of 2013, they planted over (200) trees. Question: Co-chair Banta asked what a tree canopy is? **Response:** a tree canopy involves taking an overhead view of the city that shows how much percentage actually covers the trees. They also started a plant-a-tree program i.e., if there is a tree stump on the property, it can be replaced with a new tree. Question: Co-chair Banta asked about high rooted trees that tend to break up through the sidewalk? **Response:** it was explained how a tree's roots extend out 2 to 3 feet and providing a larger planting pot is better for a tree's growth. The purpose is to incorporate the right tree in the right place.

\*There was an extensive tree planting program developed within the last six years. Since 2006, they have planted approximately (200-300) trees each planting season. It

was noted that 27% of Bridgeport has a tree canopy for the Adopt-a-tree program. The planting will be done in low to moderate income communities. It was noted that the city's website can be accessed for residents to submit their tree planting request. They will also engage with more community groups and there is a tree owner's manual and a guide to trees brochure available to the community – *the manuals were distributed to the committee members.*

*Application #'s 14(A) and 14(B) were presented by Kristen Dubay Horton of the Health Department for the program name indicated:*

- 14(A)      **Healthy Corner Store Façade – Funding Request \$65,000.00**  
                 **Citizen's Union recommendation: \$0**
- 14(B)      **Healthy Corner Store Façade – Funding Request \$40,000.00**  
                 **Citizen's Union recommendation: \$40,000.00**

Kristen Bay-Horton Director Health Department stated there were two applications for the same program. They are looking to transform corner stores into places where people can have access to healthy foods. They are looking to transform two corner stores and the funds will provide the façade improvements, noting that they can't do construction with the funds. It was noted that they will plan to locate an additional three stores in other neighborhoods. She gave an example that if a store owner removes rows of unhealthy foods and replace them with fruits and vegetables, they will still see the same revenue. She relayed that produce will be offered to the community at a reasonable price. Question: Co-chair Banta asked where the cooking classes take place? **Response:** they conduct the cooking classes at: Ralphola Taylor Center; Dunbar School and Tisdale School. It was stated that Cooking Matters provides training on how to prepare the food and also how to shop for healthy food. It was noted that the program will also work in conjunction with the Farmers Market.

\*These programs consist of the healthy corner store initiative that has become popular in surrounding cities. They will replace other stores where you will be able to buy healthy foods. It was mentioned that particularly on the east end of Bridgeport, residents have to drive or take a lengthy bus ride to the nearest grocery store. They will use the funding to do two corner stores on the east end, noting that it's important to improve how the store looks on the outside. Also, people will be educated on how to purchase and prepare healthier type foods and vegetables. It was noted that they will begin the façade improvements on the first store that will be accessible by food on June 30 and the second store will be open within the following year.

- 15)              COB: Dept of Aging  
                 **Senior Citizen Program – Funding Request \$ 44,000.00**  
                 **Citizen's Union recommendation: \$37,400.00**

Rosemarie Hoyt, Program Coordinator stated that the program strives to see that the seniors meet their full potential. It was noted that the Parks & Recreation



Department provides the dollar ride program for the seniors. It was stated that a Podiatrist comes in once a month to cut the seniors toenails. She mentioned that there will be a holiday fair held at the Eisenhower Center on this Friday and Saturday and she invited everyone to stop by to shop. The funding is needed to continue the services for the seniors, payroll, office supplies, the clerical aide and one part-time employee. It was stated that it would be impossible to serve the seniors without the funding. Comment: Council member Lyons commented that everything connected to helping the senior centers is a necessary and good thing.

\*There are three centers located at the Eisenhower Center, North End Bethany Center and the Black Rock Senior Center. The members are 55 years old and up that come from diverse backgrounds. They provide nutrition, health screenings, transportation, recreation, and use of the pool, food stamp assistance, housing assistance and various exercise programs, theatre trips. and there is a hairdresser that visits. It was noted that membership is currently low due to the bad weather. They have a nurse that visits once a month to check blood pressure and monitor diabetes. They need the funding to continue the services and for two part-time employees. The program is specifically for seniors and disabled persons. It was noted that the social services employee assists with applications and referrals. Approval of the request was urged.

16) COB: Public Facilities  
**Downtown Urban Enhance – Funding Request \$240,000.00**  
**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$0**

Steve Hladun stated this funding is to augment the downtown streetscape project that is currently being planned. It's a federal administration grant, city project by the Transportation Authority and the city. The funding will improve the gateway near the train station, bus station and ferry. They are working with the state on all the coordinates, approvals and permits. He encouraged the council members to think about certain areas in their district that need improvements. It was noted that an attractive gateway goes a long way to how a neighborhood is looked at. Question: Council member DeJesus asked if this is a project they are working on in conjunction with the Downtown Special Services District (DSSD)? **Response:** they do work with the DSSD and they are supportive of the work that they do.

\*This request was for improvements for crosswalks and for improvements to the area around the train station located between John Street and Water Street. It's a multiple component of the larger streetscape enhancement and it will provide gateway service to residents who frequent Metro North. They are working with the Connecticut DOT on the project and the funding is needed to enhance the gateway.

17) COB: OPED  
**Barnum Area Storefront – Funding Request \$50,000.00**  
**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$25,000.00**

The representative for this application wasn't present.

18) COB: OPED

**Downtown Storefront – Funding Request \$25,000.00**

**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$25,000.00**

The representative for this application wasn't present.

*Application #'s 19 through 28 were presented by Debbie Sims; CoB: OPED and ONR Organization for the program name indicated:*

19) **Upper East Side – Funding Request \$50,000.00**

**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$50,000.00**

20) **NRZ Community Workshop – Funding Request \$15,000.00**

**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$0**

21) **B Green Projects – Funding Request \$25,000.00**

**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$18,000.00**

22) **Reservoir NRZ – Funding Request \$50,000.00**

**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$25,000.00**

23) **East End NRZ – Funding Request \$50,000.00**

**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$25,000.00**

24) **Hollow NRZ – Funding Request \$50,000.00**

**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$25,000.00**

25) **East Side NRZ – Funding Request \$50,000.00**

**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$25,000.00**

26) **Mill Hill NRZ – Funding Request \$50,000.00**

**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$25,000.00**

27) **West Side NRZ – Funding Request \$50,000.00**

**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$25,000.00**

28) **South End NRZ – Funding Request \$50,000.00**

**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$25,000.00**

Ms. Simms stated that each NRZ is different and they have their own independent identify – *she referred to the NRZ maps to point out some of the projects that have been don in some of the neighborhoods.* She mentioned the B Green application

and she relayed that they will host the largest B Green beautification day with over (600) volunteers that will come in to help clean up the city. She further stated that they were also applying for additional monies to do an Easter egg hunt, noting that there aren't any community based funds to hold the event; so that's why the application was submitted to benefit other smaller community projects.

\*The representative explained that the NRZ's were created to work with the city for the purpose of moving things forward. They care about the community and they work hard attending approximately eight meetings per year. They conduct clean ups and they enlisted (400-500) dedicated volunteers to help. Each NRZ has its own identify that consist of different features and aspects that improve the neighborhood – *other information that was outlined in the booklet regarding streetscape improvements was briefly reviewed.* It was mentioned that a new NRZ would be created. They conducted over twenty clean ups last summer that was done in conjunction with the B Green Initiative. The volunteers and NRZ's engage the community to come together to improve neighborhoods, noting that they are going in the direction of completing plans in each neighborhood. It was noted that all the NRZ's meet once per month. They currently share the funding source, which allows improvements to get done in an area that might not have the funding.

*Application #'s 29 through 34 were presented by Tyler Fairbairn; CoB: HCD and Housing & Community Development Organization for the program name indicated:*

**29) Homeowner Rehab – Funding Request \$258,253.00**  
**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$100,000.00**

This program is for low income homeowners that are primarily disabled and may have code violations that make the home uninhabitable to live in. They will cap the individual award at \$15,000, noting that's generally the amount for a costlier repair. It's an incredibly popular program and they are looking to fund it. It was noted that they are currently in the process of spending the remaining funds from last year.

\*This program offers up to \$15,000.00 for income eligible homeowners. They are currently taking applications and they generally help seventeen (17) residents per year; but they hope to help up to twenty (20) people this year. They primarily help the elderly and disabled. There is a program criteria that the homeowner has to be current on their taxes and water bill.

**30) Housing Program Delivery – Funding Request \$140,000.00**

It was stated that the total CDBG funds includes paying for salaries, legal council and copy machine lease. It's needed to supplement salaries with the housing cost.

**31) COB: OPED/HCD CDBG Admin – Funding Request \$593,817.00**  
**Citizen's Union recommendation: \$543,817.00**

The money funds the department and for administration costs and if there is a remaining balance, it goes toward supplies and professional services. It was noted that application #30 supplements application #31.

32) **ESG Admin – Funding Request \$15,169.50**  
**Citizen’s Union recommendation: \$15,169.50**

This program is managed by Jennifer Rodriguez. It was stated that both programs #32 and #33 –*below* received more money than they did last year, so it was felt that the department could survive on that amount. And a portion of the funding will be allocated to supplement Jennifer Rodriguez’s salary.

\*This request will fund the homeless program and the dollar amount represents 7.5% of the allocation received.

33) **HOPWA Admin – Funding Request \$24,093.00**  
**Citizen’s Union recommendation: \$23,287.00**

This funding equates to 3% of the allocation. The funds are used to assist persons with AID’s throughout Fairfield County.

34) **108 Loan Obligation – Funding Request \$670,625.25**  
**Citizen’s Union recommendation: \$670,625.25**

It was explained that the city borrowed against future CDBG allocations and they are in the process of paying it back. The funds support the HOME Program that is dedicated to affordable housing. There is money in the local Home Program account and individuals can apply for the funds throughout the year. The program is specifically designed for those who are unable to obtain a traditional bank loan.

**ADJOURNED**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOVED TO ADJOURN**  
**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ-WALKER SECONDED**  
**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Graham  
Telesco Secretarial Services